



CITY OF MANCHESTER

Department of Health

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Public Health Director

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Deputy Public Health Director

PRESS RELEASE

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2004 Surveillance Activities for West Nile Virus Begin in Manchester

Manchester, NH – The Manchester Health Department announced today that it has begun surveillance for West Nile Virus in the City of Manchester.

The public is being asked to report sightings of dead crows or blue jays to the Manchester Health Department. If the crows or blue jays are appropriate specimens for testing, they will be collected by Health Department staff and submitted to the New Hampshire Public Health Laboratory.

The Manchester Health Department has established a West Nile Virus information line to assist citizens with concerns and questions, and to receive reports of dead birds. The phone number is 624-6466, Ext. #325 and is staffed during normal business hours. After normal business hours, citizens can leave a voice message that will be returned the next business day. On weekends, dead birds may be reported to the Manchester Police Department's Animal Control Division at 668-8711, Ext. #441.

West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. For humans, the risk of contracting the infection is low and in the overwhelming majority of cases, there are no symptoms or only mild flu-like symptoms. If illness does occur, it usually happens 3 to 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. The elderly are considered at higher risk of more severe disease, the symptoms of which include severe headache, high fever, stiff neck, confusion, loss of consciousness and muscle weakness. In extremely rare cases, the disease has caused death.

"Since we know West Nile Virus is endemic in Manchester, we will be testing fewer birds and mosquitoes this year," according to Fred Rusczek, MPH, Manchester's Public Health Director. "Our primary message for the public is avoid being bitten by mosquitoes and eliminate mosquito breeding areas."



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Prevention Guidelines for West Nile Virus

1. Eliminate standing water and other mosquito breeding locations.

- Remove old tires from your property.
- Dispose of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or other containers. Don't overlook containers that have become overgrown by aquatic vegetation.
- Drill holes in the bottom of containers that are left outside.
- Make sure roof gutters are clean and properly draining.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools and hot tubs. If not in use, keep empty and covered and keep cover free of standing water.
- Aerate garden ponds or stock them with fish.
- Turn over wheelbarrows and wading pools when not in use.
- Change the water in birdbaths at least twice weekly.
- Remind or help neighbors to eliminate breeding sites on their property.

2. Be aware of where mosquitoes live and breed and keep them from entering your home.

- Mosquitoes lay their eggs in stagnant water. Weeds, tall grass, and bushes provide an ideal outdoor home for the adult *Culex pipiens* mosquito (the common northern house mosquito), which is most commonly associated with West Nile Virus.
- Mosquitoes can enter homes through unscreened windows or doors, or broken screens. Make sure that all doors and windows have tight-fitting screens and repair or replace all screens in your home that have tears or holes.

3. Protect yourself from mosquito bites.

- If outside during evening, nighttime, or dawn hours when mosquitoes are most active and likely to bite, children and adults should wear protective clothing such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and socks.
- Consider using an effective insect repellent containing DEET (N,N-diethyl-methyl-meta-tolamide). Use a repellent containing 10% or less DEET for children, and no more than 30% DEET for adults. Use DEET containing insect repellents according to the manufacture's directions. Children should not apply DEET to themselves.
- Vitamin B, ultrasonic devices, incense, and bug zappers have not been shown to be effective in preventing mosquito bites.

For more information, contact the Manchester Health Department's West Nile Virus information line at 624-6466 x325.